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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/49/L.68

Fifteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/49/71), submitted in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/49/L.68 relating to the strengthening of the United Nations system. During its consideration of the statement, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. The terms of reference of the draft resolution are indicated in paragraph 1 of the Secretary-General's statement. The Advisory Committee notes that under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would, inter alia, decide to establish an open-ended high-level working group which would undertake a thorough review of the studies and reports of the relevant United Nations bodies and submissions of Member States and observers, as well as studies and reports of independent commissions, non-governmental organizations, institutions, scholars and other experts, on subjects relating to the revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system. In operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, the Working Group would be requested to commence its substantive work during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly and submit a report on its work before the end of that session.

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

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3. The Advisory Committee further notes that, as indicated in paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would be requested to provide, within existing resources to be supplemented by a trust fund to which voluntary contributions could be solicited, full assistance to the Working Group, including the necessary facilities and support services. The Advisory Committee inquired, but was not provided with information regarding the amount of voluntary contributions pledged or received.

4. On the basis of assumptions outlined in paragraphs 3 to 6 of his statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/49/71), the Secretary-General estimates that total requirements for 1995 would amount to $451,100, while the estimated requirements for 1996 are shown as $1,673,400 for a total estimate of $2,124,500 for 1995 and 1996. The breakdown of the requirements is provided in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's statement. As indicated there, of the total estimate of $2,124,500, $288,400 has been estimated for staff costs, $500,000 for consultants and $1,336,100 for conference-servicing requirements.

5. With regard to conference servicing, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 3 (a) of the Secretary-General's statement that, prior to commencing its substantive work during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the Working Group would also meet during the forty-ninth session to discuss organizational matters. The Advisory Committee further notes from paragraph 3 (b) of the statement that while the Working Group would still need to determine the frequency of its meetings, it was assumed for budgeting purposes that a limited number of meetings would be held in New York during the period from September to December 1995. For the period from 1 January through September 1996, it has been assumed that the Working Group would hold one or two meetings per week, for a maximum total of 78 meetings. Further information regarding documentation and interpretation requirements is contained in paragraph 3 (b) and (e) of the Secretary-General's statement.

6. As indicated in paragraphs 8 and 10 of the Secretary-General's statement, it is not anticipated that additional appropriations will be required for conference services since the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 both include provision for meetings in addition to those already in the calendar of conferences. However, as also indicated in paragraph 8, this potential for absorption is contingent on the number and distribution of meetings being consistent with the pattern in previous years. However, in this connection, the Advisory Committee's own review of the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997 revealed that demand for conference-servicing requirements exceeded capacity; in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, it is therefore difficult, at this time, to ascertain the impact of the meetings of the Working Group on conference-servicing capacity.

7. With regard to staff resources, estimated requirements as indicated in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's statement amount to $288,400 for 1995 and 1996. As indicated in paragraph 5 of the statement, it is estimated that staff resources for three work-months (of one P-5, one P-4 and one General Service staff) would be required to undertake the activities envisaged during 1995, while with respect to 1996, it is estimated that nine work-months of the same number and level of staff would be required. The functions to be performed by

the staff at the Professional as well as the General Service level are indicated in paragraph 6 of the Secretary-General's statement. From the information provided to it, the Advisory Committee believes that one staff member at the Professional level and one at the General Service level would be able to discharge satisfactorily the required functions.

8. As indicated in paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's statement, it is proposed to utilize consultancy services to assist in the substantive servicing of the meetings of the Working Group, the cost to be met from the trust fund to be established. The Advisory Committee points out that the services described in paragraph 3 (e) of the Secretary-General's statement can be provided through expertise already available in the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee expects that consultants would be used only to provide expertise which is not available in the Secretariat, regardless of the source of funding.

9. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 6 of the draft resolution that the provisional agenda of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly would include an item entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system". The Advisory Committee trusts that in carrying out this initiative of the Assembly, the normal consultative procedure would be utilized in matters involving the other organizations of the United Nations system.

10. The Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/49/L.68, no additional appropriation will be required for the 1994-1995 programme budget.

11. As for 1996-1997, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 10 of the statement that the Secretary-General expects to submit revised estimates for 1996-1997 to the General Assembly "to finance additional staff to service the Working Group in 1996". The Advisory Committee believes that this is inconsistent with paragraph 5 of the draft resolution.